

RESPITE CARE Consumer Fact Sheet

Respice refers to a short time of rest or relief. It allows the caregiver a break from day-to-day duties while the care recipient receives help from qualified individuals. There are many different ways and settings in which respite care can be provided. Respite care is beneficial to the health and well being of the person providing care as well as the care recipient.

What are the different types of services that provide respite care?

In-home Respite Care

Provided in the home by professional caregivers or trained volunteers; they can be employed privately or through a private, non-profit or government-funded agency. In-home respite care can be provided as needed based on the needs of the person and the care partners. Services may include: companionship, personal care, homemaking, or skilled care. The service provider will spend quality time with the individual and allow the caregiver time to shop, rest, or pursue other activities of choice either outside of the home or at home. Use our interview guide for hiring in-home aides at Caregivers Corner on this website.

Adult Day Centers

Adult day centers offer group respite care that is provided outside the home and designed to meet the individual needs of the care recipient while supporting strengths, abilities, and independence. Throughout the day, participants have the opportunity to interact with others while being part of a structured environment. Daily activities may include music, recreation, discussion, and support groups. Hours of service vary, but centers are often open 7-10 hours per day five days a week. Transportation may be available.

Residential/Overnight Respite Care

Residential facilities allow care recipients to stay overnight, for a few days or a few weeks. Many hospitals and nursing homes have specialized units for this purpose. In some areas, assisted living facilities and adult foster care homes have beds available for families seeking short-term residential respite care. Advance planning may be required, as medical tests may be needed before the person can be admitted as a short-term resident. There are a variety of providers—some may be licensed, others may not. This may affect the length of stay, required medical planning, and the information required before the person is accepted into the program. Look for a setting that will best meet your needs.

Informal Respite Care

A family member, close friend, neighbor, or church volunteer can provide respite care. A trustworthy and caring person can give you time to run errands or just take a break. Consider putting together a schedule of times when others can take a turn with caregiving duties.

Respite Care for Emergency Situations

Unexpected events occur now and then, such as an accident, surgery, or long-distance trip. It is helpful to plan ahead in case of emergency. Seek out agencies and facilities that offer emergency services. Experiment with a service in a non-emergency situation to see how it works.

Combining Services

Many families find they need to combine several of these options to adequately cover their care needs. For example, a caregiver still working full-time might schedule the care recipient in an adult day program twice a week and also have an in-home provider come three days a week to provide companionship, care, and supervision while the caregiver works. This caregiver may also use residential respite once a year to take a vacation.

How do I select respite care services?

If you are selecting an in-home aide, arrange a time to interview the person in your home. Here are some questions to ask:

- Why are you interested in this job?
- What is your training?
- What are your past/current home care experiences?
- Have you ever worked with someone with dementia?
- How would you handle...? (Give examples of behaviors or challenges)
- Do you have any special skills?
- When/how often are you available? Do you have back-up if you are unable to come?
- Are you bonded?
- Who can I talk with at your agency if I have a concern?
- Tell me about yourself? Interests? Hobbies?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Do you have references? Request names and contact information.

When selecting an adult day center, arrange a meeting with the staff and look around the center. Here are some questions to ask in this setting:

- What are the hours? Fees? Services?
- Is transportation available? Can they suggest transportation options?
- What types of activities do they offer?
- Are people with dementia separated from other participants or included in general activities?
- How many participants is each staff member responsible for?
- Do they assist with personal care?
- Are there individual plans of care? How are different functioning levels addressed?
- How do they handle...(e.g. wandering)?
- How do they ensure safety?
- What are reasons for discharge?

Cost of Services

The care recipient or their family usually pays for private respite care services. Medicare does not pay for this type of help. For in-home services, the fee is usually based on an hourly rate.

Be sure to ask about possible sources of financial support. Some organizations offer volunteer companionship care and some offer sliding scale payment options. Additionally, your local Area Agency on Aging office may be able to access your eligibility for the Medicaid Home & Community Based Services Waiver or voucher programs to provide financial assistance covering the cost of respite care services.